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ABSTRACT

Inservice workshops conducted by elementary principals and teachers could be used to prepare all teachers to use outdoor education as a way to teach the present elementary school curriculum, with additional time spent on science and social studies. Teachers would be introduced to a program that uses the outdoors at least 50% of the time as the main teaching medium. Involving teachers in teaching their colleagues allows understanding of major problems encountered during implementation of methodological and/or program innovations. Once principals are prepared to conduct sessions, materials, texts, and resources associated with social studies and science could be used to show how the total elementary school curriculum can be integrated and taught successfully through the use of outdoor education. Implementation could be achieved through the inservice workshops run for a 3-week period in the summer break with follow-up, short-time workshops held during the school year. The course should be offered in two consecutive summer sessions with the intervening school year and the following school year being used to help in the actual classroom implementation of the innovation. Success of the program could be measured through the use of teaching situation observations, teacher and student questionnaires, and student evaluations. (BRR)

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by

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RC 013291

An Approach to Inservice Education to Promote the Use of Outdoor Education as a Teaching Method in the Elementary School

This article outlines an approach to inservice education that is based on the involvement of principals and teachers as prime agents of change. Through the use of principals and teachers as instructors in teaching other teachers it is hoped that there will be less resistance to change.

The use of outdoor education as a teaching method that encourages the integration of all curricular material should make it easier to include more than just the "basics" in the regular school day. Providing teachers and principals with the necessary theoretical knowledge and skills for classroom practice should remove inhibitions on the use of the outdoors. Another important aspect of inservice addressed is that of in-the-classroom support for teachers who are attempting to adopt a new teaching style.

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The main thrust of this program is to have the principals and teachers in elementary schools willing and capable of using outdoor education as a way to teach the present elementary school curriculum. The accomplishment of this goal will at the same time increase the science and social studies content of the elementary school curriculum and make for more opportunities to apply the mathematics presently taught.

The goal mentioned above could be achieved through the use of inservice workshops run for a three-week period in the summer break with follow-up, short-time workshops held during the school year. There should also be an attempt made to have personnel available as needed during the first two years the elementary schools are initiating the outdoor education approach to teaching. The workshops would be for all the elementary school personnel, supervisors (where they exist), principals, vice-principals, classroom teachers, and specialist teachers.

A search of the literature on elementary science; reading National Science Funded research reports; and, talking to science educators and elementary school teachers soon revealed that elementary science really never has been treated as a subject with any great importance by elementary schools. There have been some excellent elementary science

science curriculu proposed throughout the last one hundred years, but those curriculi have never been fully implemented as the elementary teacher has not had nor is presently being given, an education that would prepare them to teach science. This author has studied and worked in the areas of environmental education and outdoor education to upgrade his own proficiency and understanding of how these programs could be used to enhance the teaching (and learning) of science at the elementary school level.

As has been mentioned, elementary school teachers usually have an extremely weak or non existent backgroun in science. While this condition exists there is not much hope of ever getting a good science program started in the elementary schools. Many of the science methods courses given to the elementary teachers have been attempts to acquaint them with the various programs available. All of these programs either play down the need for the teacher to have any science background or, attempt to provide the bare minimum of science content so that the teacher can try to teach the program. The present programs in most colleges of education do not require a science background of nor try to provide a science background for the elementary pre-service teachers. The present back to the basics movement (reading, writing and mathematics) with all other areas regarded as extras, has effectively blocked arguments to include science as a separate subject, on an equal footing, in the elementary school. Given all these negatives, it seems only reasonable to assume

that the best way to obtain theproper place and emphasis for science in the elementary school is to promote an integrative, methodological approach. Outdoor education as a method of teaching the "three R's" should help to achieve that end.

Much of the literature published in in-service workshops for teachers speaks to the one-shot, three-to-ten-day type. Some workshops are a full academic semester or a three week summer institute. Most of the follow-up consists of a pre- and post-test using attitude scales or opinionaires. Nothing could be found in the literature that consisted of at least a three week session with in-classroom help for the teacher plus at least one more three week session.

The literature does support the use of the elementary school principal as a positive element in influencing elementary teachers about a teaching method or a syllabus. Sloan (1972) investigated the perceptions held by principals and teachers on certain aspects of the adoption process involved in innovation and change in elementary schools' programs. It was revealed that the principals viewed themselves as the most important factor in proposing and adopting new programs. Principals viewed the teachers as the second most influential element in the proposal and adoption of a new program. The teachers viewed themselves and their principals as the most important program proposers and primary sources of influence in the adoption of new programs. Principals viewed pre-service training for new programs as adequate, but in-service training was considered to be less

effective. However, teachers viewed both pre-service and in-service training for new programs as inadequate. Hellwig (1973) investigated how elementary school principals, in traditional schools as compared to principals in innovative schools, perceived their roles. The results of this study revealed that there was more cooperation between the principals and teachers of innovative schools than those of traditional schools. Another conclusion was that the principals of traditional schools viewed their roles as one of maintaining present practices while the innovative principals viewed their roles primarily as ones of change. Sarason (1974) also reached the same conclusions in a similar study.

An article by Heichberger (1975) supported the view that the elementary principal is the most important element in any change that takes place in an elementary school. Elementary teachers perceive their principal as the person who established the need for program change or for maintenance of the 'status quo'. When elementary teachers actually perceive their principals as change oriented and when the teachers were involved in planning for change; participated more readily in the change; and considered their principals more trustworthy (Walter, 1978). Through the use of the Professional Interpersonal Interaction System Model (PIIS) Morrone (1979) found that the teachers and principals of elementary schools viewed their roles as complimentary.

It would be important to prepare the principals and teachers to become workshop personnel and become involved in

teaching their own colleagues. The reasoning is that elementary teachers know best what the major problems are that are encountered during the implementation of any methodological and/or program innovations. Also, through the use of elementary teachers teaching in the school district, it should be easier to change teachers' attitudes towards the innovation. Articles by Evans (1979) and by Bailey and James (1978) support that contention. It is imperative to involve the people you wish to change at all levels of the change process. This means that elementary school personnel should be involved in the decision to change, the change that is to be adopted, the inservice program to be used in accomplishing the adoption, and the actual implementation itself.

The only strong negative or restraining forces acting against the use of outdoor education as a method of teaching are the teachers' lack of theoretical background and skills and their feeling that they don't want to make the change. There is general agreement that something is needed to improve the education in the elementary schools. Some believe that a move back to the basics will improve the quality, but many feel such a move is just a retrenchment of the old curriculum which does not include the "frills" of science, social studies, physical education, art, and music; except when there is time.

Those principals academically qualified, judged competent and interested would be used where possible to help in the teaching of subsequent courses to the teachers.

The principals, all of them, would be expected to prepare the teachers for the three week summer session and to serve as the resident consultant, along with one or more of those who actually taught the course, when needed. The principals and vice-principals would be involved in an on-going assessment of the success of the program. This would involve identifying problems, areas needing more attention, teachers needing more help, and organizing the workshops that need to be held during the school year.

The outdoor education program would be centered around the present elementary curriculum with more emphasis being given to the integration of social studies and science. The materials, texts and resources associated with these two programs would be used to show how the total elementary school curriculum (art, reading, writing, physical education, mathematics, science, music and social studies) can be integrated and taught successfully through the use of outdoor education.

The course should be offered in two consecutive summer sessions with the intervening school year and the following school year being used to help in the actual classroom implementation of the innovation. The teachers would be subjected to a program that will use the outdoors at least 50% of the time as the main teaching medium. This over-emphasis is necessary to give teachers the necessary skills to identify and use the various aspects of the outdoors as teaching opportunities. The teachers need the exposure

to help them change their presently held feeling that real teaching has to occur in a classroom that has four walls and is inside a building labelled as a school.

The success of the program could be measured through the use of teaching situation observations, teacher and student questionnaires, and student evaluations. A comparison would be made between the teaching-learning situation prior to the start of the program, half-way through the program, and after the program has been in place for two years. Instruments would have to be developed or adapted to determine: teachers' attitudes toward the use of outdoor education as a teaching method; level of use of outdoor education; integration level of all subject areas; percentage of increase in social studies and science content in the program taught; attitude of the students to the change in teaching method; and, level of attainment of curriculum objectives by the students after the adoption of the new program and teaching style. As this data was collected it could be used to provide for an ongoing change in the program to meet the perceived and revealed weaknesses found in it. The teaching situation evaluation could be completed through the use of an altered Flanders or I.O.T.A. instrument or some other teaching situation evaluation instrument. The increase in social studies and science content would be determined through a comparison of the daily lesson plan books of the teachers before and after initiation and completion of the program. To determine attitude toward and use of the outdoors, one could use an

altered version of Mirka's (1973) outdoor education attitude inventory and Chase's (1969) outdoor education inventory.

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